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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4929
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1044
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9816
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4273
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1735
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3463
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0458
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6913
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4529
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2799
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0442
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001115

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: A BURMESE GENERAL GETS HIS COMEUPPANCE

REF: A. RANGOON 76

[1](#)B. 05 RANGOON 1294

Classified By: CDA Villarosa for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Charge and DATT met with LTG Myint Swe August 2 to see what kind of dialogue we could maintain. It became clear that Myint Swe's previously expansive view of his areas of authority (reftels) has been considerably reduced. Now he's just a general responsible for embassy security in Rangoon. He referred Charge to other Ministers on almost every issue she raised, but smilingly agreed to keep channels of communication open. End Summary

[1](#)2. (C) Arranging this meeting took time, and the explanation revealed Myint Swe's drop in status. After meeting in November 2005 and January 2006 shortly after each had been requested, we were waved off when we sought a meeting in May.

We then submitted another request in late June. Myint Swe apologized for the delay in arranging this meeting, saying that his boss had forgotten about the request and Myint Swe had hesitated to ask him about it. However, on seeing our Air Attache at a Chinese reception the previous night, he reminded his boss about the request, got the go ahead, and immediately arranged the meeting. Unlike previous meetings he did not have a translator present, and was accompanied only by one officer, Col. Win Myint, who appeared to be his aide, but also is affiliated with Military Security Affairs (MSA), the military intelligence branch. Charge said that she wanted to keep channels of communication open in both directions. Myint Swe smiled and said "yes, yes."

Whatever He Does, He Does Not Go to Nay Pyi Taw

[1](#)3. (C) We asked Myint Swe several times to explain his responsibilities as Bureau of Special Operations Commander. First response, "Defense only." Second response, "I'm not Chief of MSA anymore." Third response, "BG Hla Htay Win is now the Rangoon Military Commander." Fourth response, "LTG Ye Myint is MSA Commander now, if you have questions for MSA, send them to MSA officers." Fifth response, "You have the

Rangoon Commander. I am his Commander. I am only responsible for security of embassies and facilities in Rangoon." We moved on.

¶4. (C) Myint Swe has only been to the new capital twice. He was amazed that DATT had already visited three times. Charge said she would shortly make her second trip. He asked for her impressions. She pointed out the vastness and scattered nature of the ministries appeared to complicate communication. She added that the military and civilians should find ways to come together and talk, which prompted him to change the subject. When Charge earlier suggested a need for morning and afternoon flights between Rangoon and Naypyitaw, he offered to pass the suggestion along to the Minister of Transportation and even arrange an afternoon flight for Charge for her next trip.

I Know Nothing

¶5. (C) Myint Swe does know who is responsible, at least on paper, for various issues and suggested Charge meet with someone else regarding almost every issue she raised. Health and humanitarian assistance, talk to the Health Minister; American prisoners, talk to the Home Affairs Minister; a more inclusive political process, talk to the Information Minister; release of political prisoners, talk to the Home Affairs Minister. Finally he said, "My responsibility is to secure our city and look after the Ministries in Yangon. Political business. . . go talk to someone else."

¶6. (C) Charge asked Myint Swe if he had read the book, The

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World is Flat, which she gave him when they last met. He replied yes, and expressed hope that Burma would benefit from "trickle down" from India and China, saying they were among the world's fifteen richest nations. He then asked if we could lift sanctions. Charge replied that our conditions were well-known, to which he nodded, and she added that Burma is unattractive to investors generally because it lacks predictability and transparency. Myint Swe replied that he would inform his boss.

¶7. (C) We also briefly discussed the visit of UN U/SYG Gambari and avian influenza. When asked how the regime would follow-up Gambari's visit, Myint Swe readily referred to the road map, adding "our leader has explained this as a step-by-step process. And we will have another session of the National Convention in Yangon later this year." But when Charge pressed for more specifics, he referred her elsewhere. Myint Swe's knowledge of avian influenza appeared minimal. When Charge mentioned we had been able to help when there was an outbreak in Mandalay, he expressed appreciation and stated "Now, we're OK. There is no bird flu in Yangon." Charge cautioned that the risk of infection was not necessarily over, so continued vigilance and full reporting would be important. "Yes, yes, we are OK. I read where Indonesia has it very bad; also Phitsanulok." Charge noted the latter is close to Burma's border; to which Myint Swe giggled "yes, yes."

U.S. Knows of Thaksin Visit And He Doesn't

¶8. (C) We clearly surprised Myint Swe by asking why Thai Prime Minister Thaksin was visiting Burma that same day. "How do you know this?" We replied that we read it in the Bangkok Post and on the internet (plus it was the rumor of the evening at the Chinese reception the previous night, which Myint Swe attended.) His response: "My boss didn't tell me Thaksin was coming. I talked to him this morning and he didn't tell me that he was coming." When we asked if he read the newspapers or internet, he claimed he did not know how to use computers and said both computers and the Bangkok Post were too expensive. Later he asked why we thought

Thaksin was coming to Burma. Charge replied that he is Burma's neighbor, and Burma has become a difficult issue for ASEAN because of Burma's unwillingness to reform and open to the international community. Myint Swe's hurt response was only "I don't know why he is here."

19. (C) Comment: So we have another glimpse into the rise and fall of pretenders to power in Burma. In our first meeting he was a man for all seasons, and now comes across as Sgt. Schultz. He exhibited more status, confidence and a broader vision as a two star general than he does now as a three star. Myint Swe's primary credential is his closeness to Senior General Than Shwe. We believe his job is to act as Than Shwe's eyes and ears in Rangoon, yet he doesn't appear to be picking up much. Others have definitely let him know where his responsibilities stop. While not the useful channel we once thought he might be, we will nonetheless seek more meetings, if for nothing more than comic relief. End Comment.
VILLAROSA